



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

March 25, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker, House of Representatives
H-232, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader, House of Representatives
H-204, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leader McCarthy,

We write to strongly urge you to include a prohibition on water shutoffs as you negotiate an agreement on a response to the coronavirus pandemic. Access to safe water is an essential public health and safety measure to prevent the spread of COVID-19. As such, any final agreement on the COVID-19 stimulus response bill must include robust provisions preventing water shutoffs.

In 2016, a nationwide assessment of water shutoffs for non-payment revealed that an estimated 15 million people in the United States experienced a water shutoff, a shocking 1 out of every 20 households. Moreover, water shutoffs disproportionately impact cities with higher rates of poverty, unemployment, and people of color. The City of Detroit, for example, shut off water to more than 112,000 households between 2014 and 2018. Earlier this year, the City of Detroit estimates that there were about 2,800 occupied homes with no water service. Sadly, this issue spans well beyond Detroit and across the U.S. This could seriously impact efforts to contain the spread of COVID-19 we are experiencing in our country.

Households that have their water disconnected are less able to protect themselves from COVID-19. According to the CDC, one of the most effective ways to prevent the spread of COVID-19 is to wash one's hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Access to safe water is essential to maintain proper hygiene and prevent the transmission of COVID-19 to individuals inside and outside the household.

We must prevent water shutoffs by ensuring that no public water system servicing an individual or household disconnects or interrupts service during the COVID-19 emergency. That also means that debt collectors must not disconnect or terminate water or sewer service with respect

to consumer water bill debts during this time. To ensure we prevent shutoffs in as efficient a manner as possible, Congress should consider utilizing the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance (LIHEAP) program to assist low-income households, particularly those with the lowest incomes, that pay a high proportion of household income for drinking water and wastewater services.

No person living in the U.S. should be forced to survive without safe and clean water access, let alone during a global pandemic. It is essential that any final agreement on the COVID-19 stimulus response bill include a water shutoff prohibition for the duration of the crisis.

Sincerely,

Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress

Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress

Daniel T. Kildee
Member of Congress

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Member of Congress

Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress

Haley M. Stevens
Member of Congress

Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress

Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress

Ilhan Omar
Member of Congress

Jerry McNerney
Member of Congress

Marcia L. Fudge
Member of Congress

Harley Rouda
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Suzanne Bonamici
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Tim Ryan
Member of Congress

Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress

Brenda Lawrence
Member of Congress

Donna Shalala
Member of Congress

Veronica Escobar
Member of Congress

Andy Levin
Member of Congress

Mark Pocan
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Joe Neguse
Member of Congress

Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

Joyce Beatty
Member of Congress

Sean Casten
Member of Congress

Deb Haaland
Member of Congress

Darren Soto
Member of Congress

Jesús G. “Chuy” García
Member of Congress

Grace Meng
Member of Congress

A. Donald McEachin
Member of Congress

Mary Gay Scanlon
Member of Congress

Derek Kilmer
Member of Congress

Andre’ Carson
Member of Congress

Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

Kendra S. Horn
Member of Congress

Elissa Slotkin
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Sylvia R. Garcia
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Terri A. Sewell
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Cedric L. Richmond
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Bill Foster
Member of Congress

Bonnie Watson Coleman
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Grace F. Napolitano
Member of Congress

Sanford D. Bishop, Jr
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Raul M. Grijalva
Member of Congress

Eddie Bernice Johnson
Member of Congress

Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress

John B. Larson
Member of Congress

Emanuel Cleaver, II
Member of Congress

Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress

Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress

Alcee L. Hastings
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Wm. Lacy Clay
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Carolyn B. Maloney
Member of Congress

Cindy Axne
Member of Congress

Mike Quigley
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Jamie Raskin
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TJ Cox
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Pramila Jayapal
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James P. McGovern
Member of Congress

Steve Cohen
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Adriano Espaillat
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Paul D. Tonko
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Lizzie Fletcher
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Joseph P. Kennedy, III
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Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr.
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Jahana Hayes
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Tony Cárdenas
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Kathy Castor
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Linda T. Sánchez
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John P. Sarbanes
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Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress